

Narrative innovation in life design counseling: The case of Ryan

ABSTRACT

The main aim of this research is to study the patterns of narrative change in a case of life design counseling (LDC). The innovative moments coding system (IMCS) was used to conduct an intensive analysis of the career counseling sessions. This coding system is grounded in a narrative conception of the self, and suggests that narrative change results from the elaboration and development of narrative exceptions to a client's core problematic self-narrative. The results supports the adequacy of the IMCS to the study of change in career counseling and reveal that the intervention promotes a pattern of change characterized by three types of innovative moments: action, reflection, and protest. The results are discussed taking into account their implications for career counseling theory, research and practice.

1. Introduction

Life design counseling (LDC; [Savickas, 2011](#)) is a meaning-making approach to career intervention. Based on the epistemology of social constructionism, LDC emphasizes the role of narrative thinking for understanding and intervention in the career construction process. From this perspective, career is the macro-narrative regarding an individual's path along the work role throughout their life-span ([Savickas, 2013](#)). To support career construction, LDC aims to help clients re-author their narrative identity and project new possibilities for self-construction into their career roles ([Duarte, 2011](#)).

This intervention approach is generally organized into three distinct moments, usually corresponding to three sessions. Session one is oriented by the administration of the career construction interview (CCI; [Savickas, 2011](#)), a semi-structured interview through which the client introduces him/herself and elaborates upon relevant episodes of his/her life story. The counselor inquires concerning five topics: (1) role models for self-construction; (2) magazines, television shows or websites for manifest interests; (3) favorite story from a book or movie for the script for the next episode; (4) sayings or mottos for advice to self; and (5) early recollections for perspective regarding the present problem or transition.

Session two is dedicated to helping the client provide coherence for the life episodes addressed in the prior session. Through a coconstruction process, client and counselor explore possible meanings within the five topics previously addressed, which will predictably enable the client to identify a life theme, thereby yielding coherence and a sense of continuity to the life episodes reported.

In session three, the client formulates realistic career plans built upon his/her recently reorganized narrative identity. In this sense, the process of career construction is integrated into the client's psychosocial functioning at work and will influence other life roles.

In summary, the career problem is conceptualized as a meaning construction problem ([Cardoso, 2012](#)), the resolution of which implies the rewriting of life's micro-narratives into a macro-narrative, where career experiences and expectations reinforce the